(v) Provision of community health facilities, free medical services, medicines through medical camp and family planning camps etc.

(vi) Financial assistance to Physically Handicapped persons for their rehabilitation.

(vii) Economic development/self employment by organising entrepreneurship development training programmes.

(viii) Vocational training/guidance to enable the SC/ST persons to become self-reliant under the scheme "Earn While You Learn". Training programmes are arranged in various trades, like basket making, weaving, coir rope making, sewing, poultry training, fishing, tailoring, typing, motor driving as well as supply of necessary tools, machines, etc.

(ix) Welfare programmes such as distribution of seeds and fertilizers free of cost of SC/ST farmers, distribution of smoke-less chulhas and solar cookers to SC/ST women and construction of approach roads and adoption of villages.

(x) Social forestry schemes like distribution of fruit bearing trees, saplings and other plants etc.

R and D on Bio-diesel

2741. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that rural waste lands is being used for Karanjia tree plantations to produce Bio-diesel, urja;

(b) whether any programme of research and development has been made in this regard; and

(c) by when the result is expected in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Plantation of trees, including bio-fuel plantations such as Jatropha Curcas,

Karanja etc. on wastelands/degraded lands is an important activity under the ongoing watershed development programmes, namely the Integrated Wastelands Development Programme, Drought Prone Areas Programme and the Desert Development Programme of the Ministry of Rural Development. In addition Planning Commission is also launching a programme called 'National Mission on Jatropha' under which waste and fallow land in various States would be brought under cultivation by planting Jatropha trees.

(b) and (c) IOC R&D has conducted studies to produce bio-diesel from various vegetable oils on bench scale and pilot plant scale. The bio-diesel so produced has been found to be suitable for blending with diesel.

Frequent increase in prices of petrol and diesel

2742. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of diesel and petroleum have been recently hiked;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether this is the second such increase in the month of March, 2003;

(d) if so, the reasons for such frequent increase;

(e) whether such increase is likely to have a casacading effect on prices of various commodities and will in the process hit the life of the common people; and

(f) if so, the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (f) With the dismantling of Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) in the petroleum sector effective 1st April 2002, the pricing of petrol and diesel has been decontrolled. The oil marketing companies are now fixing the prices of petrol and diesel after taking into account the prevalent international oil prices. Thus, the variations in the